

With These Participating Professors

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Jesse A. Cooper  
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Larry C. Jenkins

Jack J. Kirkland  
Milton F. Madison  
William T. McSweeney  
H. Louis Moore  
James W. Pease  
Blair J. Smith  
Alvi O. Voigt

Penn State  
FARM AND DAIRY

Business Seminar of the Week

**H. LOUIS MOORE**  
Agric. Economist  
Penn State  
Assessing The End  
Of The Drought-  
From The Air



In the third week of July, I flew to New York City to appear on a nationally televised program to assess the economic impact of the 1988 drought. The drought was at its worst. I had done my homework but was uneasy as I boarded the airplane in Harrisburg for the short flight to La Guardia. I thought, "What a perfect opportunity to see how bad the drought is from the air." As we flew over central and eastern

counties at 4,000 feet, the damage was evident. You could see corn fields that looked as though they had more soil showing than corn stalks. As it turned out, the information didn't mean much. The host of the television program only wanted to talk about the economic impact of the drought on consumers.

As time passed the rains came and better crops than expected were harvested, at least in some places. But now concerns about 1989 are increasing. Will drought repeat next year? Even though statistical data indicates that we have not had two extreme drought years in a row for 75 years, there are uneasy concerns.

On November 13th during take off from Pittsburgh enroute to a conference in Des Moines, Iowa I

thought this would be the perfect opportunity to again assess drought conditions from the air much as I had done in July. This time I could look at Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and part of Iowa. But two things had changed. The jets flew at 35,000 feet to Chicago and at 22,000 feet from Chicago to Des Moines. The second factor that changed was the season. In mid-November the landscape was all a dull brown: a color it takes on just before the winter snows arrive.

Several interesting things were evident from the air that indicated that the drought might be retreating. The farm ponds and rivers seemed full of water. Water was evident standing in the corners of many fields as the late afternoon sun reflected from it. The barges being pushed up the upper part of the Mississippi appeared to be in no danger of going aground.

I arrived in Des Moines feeling pretty good about how observant I had been and that the drought was probably over, even though I still had concerns about subsoil moisture levels back in Pennsylvania.

The conference opened on Monday morning and agreement that, financially, agriculture has indeed turned the corner for the better. Grain prices are higher and land prices in Iowa have increased about 20 percent in 1988 (a miracle compared to the 68 percent decline in land values from 1981 to 1986). But there were concerns among the conference speakers.

Subsoil moisture levels are low in a big part of the Midwest. There is water on top but it hasn't replenished the subsoil. Then there were

serious concerns from high government officials for the environment in Iowa. Specifically mentioned was the pollution of ground water supplies.

I relaxed and leaned back in my

seat and thought, "Well, I didn't assess the end of the drought very well from the air, but this pollution concern sounds just like the concerns back home in Pennsylvania."

## Christmas Tree Growers Reject Statewide Marketing Program

HARRISBURG — Secretary of Agriculture Boyd E. Wolff announced recently that Christmas tree growers in Pennsylvania have decided against a marketing program.

Tree growers who own or grow three or more acres of Christmas trees voted in a referendum between October 24 and November 7. The vote was 175 for and 248 against.

"We are disappointed that the Christmas tree growers rejected the proposal because marketing is often the key to success in modern agriculture," said Wolff. "Under the law, growers would have had

total control of their own program."

Act 1 of 1987 returned control of commodity marketing programs to producers, who must vote to create a marketing program funded by assessments on their products.

The recent referendum was the second attempt by producers to establish a marketing program for Pennsylvania fresh-cut Christmas trees. If the program had been approved, each producer would have been assessed 10 cents per tree cut and sold. Those funds would have been used for research and marketing programs to benefit tree producers.

## Health Major Concern In Rural America

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Calling health issues facing rural America a top priority, delegates attending the 122nd Annual Convention, the National Grange last month, called for Congressional funding for the newly created office of Rural Health Research and the National Advisory Committee on Rural Health in the U.S. Department of Social Services. Separate delegate action called for federal legislation to require food service and health care workers and all incarcerated persons to be tested for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) and increased federal funds to pay for AZT medication used by AIDS victims. The delegates opposed legislation that would mandate employers to provide health care insurance for their employees. They urged Congress and the President to investigate the causes of rapid increases in Medicare and Medicaid costs and report to the public their proposals for slowing medical cost increases while maintaining quality health care.

The Grange delegates adopted resolutions commending various law enforcement agencies for their

support of local drug awareness programs such as Drug Awareness Resistance Education (DARE) and called for additional state and federal funds to expand these programs. The delegates also advocated toughening laws dealing with illegal drug users and sellers by calling for a prohibition on the manufacturing and sale of products or paraphernalia exclusively designed for the purpose of consuming illegal drugs. They proposed giving law enforcement officers the authority to seize all personal property such as airplanes, automobiles and boats used in illegal drug dealing and recommended that seized property should be sold with the proceeds then to be used for drug prevention programs.

The Grange leaders adopted new policy calling for more accurate labeling of ingredients such as the percentage of vegetable protein contained in all meat products, irradiation, tropical fats listed separately from vegetable oils, cholesterol levels of ingredients, percentage of mechanically separated meats and the amounts of sugar and salt.

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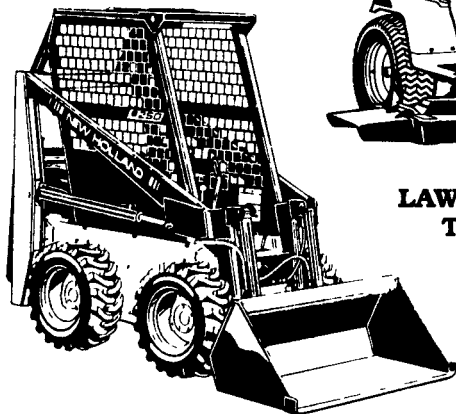
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